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CHTA Selects Florida International University to Conduct Caribbean Tourism Demand Study

- ***Research to identify opportunities to strengthen linkages between tourism and regional agriculture, manufacturing and creative industries***

Fort Lauderdale, Fla. – August 11, 2026 – The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the leading organization representing the interests of the Caribbean hospitality and tourism industry for more than 60 years, today announced that it has selected Florida International University (FIU) and the research team from its top-ranked Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management to undertake a Caribbean-wide Tourism Demand Study.

The research will measure existing and potential demand by the tourism industry for goods and services across agriculture, manufacturing, entertainment and other sectors, quantify economic leakages, identify investment opportunities, and recommend strategies to strengthen linkages between tourism and local and regional economies.

Tourism remains the leading economic sector across much of the Caribbean, generating foreign exchange earnings, tax revenue, employment and investment throughout the region. In 2025, the Caribbean welcomed an estimated 35 million stayover visitors, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and reinforcing the region's position as one of the world's most tourism-dependent regions. Visitor spending is estimated to have exceeded US \$40 billion, creating substantial demand for food, beverages, manufactured goods, entertainment services and other tourism-related inputs.

However, a significant portion of this demand continues to be met through imported goods and services, highlighting considerable opportunities to expand sourcing from Caribbean farmers, manufacturers, artisans and creative enterprises. Building on the Tourism Demand Study conducted for Jamaica in 2014 and 2015, this new regional initiative will go further to map these patterns across multiple destinations and chart practical pathways toward greater local and regional sourcing.

Conducted over a six-month period, the study will quantify demand for agricultural products, manufactured goods, entertainment services and other inputs required by the Caribbean hospitality and tourism sector. Researchers will map supply chains connecting tourism businesses with domestic producers and regional trade networks, estimate economic leakages by product and service category, identify investment opportunities, and assess the capacity and readiness of regional suppliers to meet industry demand.

The findings will inform policy, trade facilitation and investment recommendations designed to deepen economic linkages and expand opportunities for Caribbean producers and entrepreneurs

""FIU is honored to partner with CHTA on this landmark initiative. By providing robust data and actionable insights, this study will help identify opportunities to strengthen regional supply chains, foster entrepreneurship, and maximize tourism's contribution to sustainable economic development across the Caribbean," said Michael Cheng, dean of the Chaplin School, the number one ranked hospitality program in Florida. "FIU's research will combine desk analysis of tourism, trade and investment data with primary field research, including surveys of hotels, restaurants, cruise operators, attractions and tour operators, as well as interviews with government ministries, suppliers and investor groups. Applying a simulation modelling approach, the team will extrapolate from sampled businesses to produce national and regional estimates of tourism demand and expenditure patterns," he added.

Working in consultation with CHTA, FIU will study a representative sample of at least six Caribbean jurisdictions, selected to reflect varying levels of tourism intensity, geographic diversity and tourism product mix—from large all-inclusive and cruise-focused destinations to boutique and specialty markets. National Hotel and Tourism Associations, along with regional institutions, will be engaged throughout the project to ensure the findings have broad applicability across the region.

The Study is being guided by CHTA's Linkages Task Force, chaired by Immediate Past President Nicola Madden-Greig.

"Tourism must continue to serve as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, creating opportunities for Caribbean people to derive greater value from the industry and build generational wealth," said Madden-Greig. "This study will provide the data and insights necessary to unlock new opportunities for local businesses and strengthen economic resilience across the region."

The initiative forms part of CHTA's broader efforts to strengthen connections between tourism and the agricultural, manufacturing and creative sectors that support the visitor economy.

Upon completion, CHTA will share the study's final report, executive summary and policy briefs with members and regional stakeholders, including governments and development partners, providing data-driven recommendations to support implementation throughout the Caribbean.

"This important work underscores our broader vision for a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable tourism sector," said Sanovnik Destang, President of CHTA. "Complementing our efforts in human resource development, climate resilience and industry competitiveness, this study will help ensure that more of tourism's economic benefits remain within the Caribbean and contribute to long-term prosperity for our people."

"Strengthening the connection between our tourism sector and local economies is one of the most powerful ways to build lasting value for Caribbean communities," said Vanessa Ledesma, Chief Executive Officer of CHTA. "By understanding precisely where demand lies and where opportunities exist to source locally and regionally, we can help our members manage costs, support Caribbean producers, and reinforce the resilience of the industry. Florida International University brings deep regional expertise and strong research capacity, and we are pleased to partner with the university on this important work."

The Tourism Demand Study is guided by CHTA's Linkages Task Force and forms part of the association's broader effort to connect Caribbean tourism with the agricultural, manufacturing, and creative sectors that surround it. Upon completion, CHTA expects to share the study's final report, executive summary, and policy briefs with members and regional stakeholders, providing data and recommendations to support implementation across the wider Caribbean.

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About the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is the leading organization representing the interests of the Caribbean hospitality and tourism industry for more than 60 years. With 32 National Hotel Associations and 1,000 diverse members spanning hotels, resorts, tourism providers, and allied partners across the region and beyond, CHTA serves as a powerful voice, resource, and connector for the Caribbean's most vital industry. Through ongoing advocacy, professional development, industry insights, and market intelligence, CHTA helps its members thrive in today's competitive global marketplace. To learn more about membership benefits and upcoming events, visit www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com.

About Florida International University (FIU)

[Florida International University](http://www.fiu.edu) is a Top 50, preeminent public research university with 55,000 students from all 50 states and more than 140 countries, as well as an alumni network of more than 340,000. Located in the global city of Miami, the university offers more than 200 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels, including medicine and law. FIU faculty are leaders in their fields and include National Academy members, Fulbright Scholars, and MacArthur Genius Fellows. A Carnegie R1 institution, FIU drives impactful research in environmental resilience, health, and technology and innovation. Home to the Wall of Wind and Institute of Environment, FIU stands at the forefront of discovery and innovation. With a focus on student success, economic mobility and community engagement, FIU is redefining what it means to be a public research university.

About FIU's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

Florida International University's [Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management](http://hospitality.fiu.edu) is the No. 3 best hospitality school among U.S. Public Universities, ranked No. 23 in the world and No. 1 in Florida. Nearly 1,200 undergraduate and graduate students from across the nation and around the globe choose FIU for its outstanding reputation, advantageous campus locations in Miami, expert faculty, rich curriculum and real career opportunities in the international hotel, real estate, foodservice, beverage and spirits management, travel, tourism, revenue management, entertainment, and mega and large-scale event industries. As the second largest hospitality school in the country, FIU Chaplin School's population consists of 70% women and students from 72 countries represented. For more information about Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, visit <http://hospitality.fiu.edu>.

FIU Media Contact:

Ivonne Yee-Amor

1.305.299.2091

iamor@fiu.edu

CHTA Media Contact:

Claire Kunzman

1.407.228.8867

claire@anythingbutadvertising.com